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Gilbertson et al.

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(54) **CONTAINER SEALING SYSTEM**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
B67D 5/06 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **222/542**; 222/109; 222/111; 222/566; 222/569; 215/343; 215/344

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 222/109, 222/111, 542, 546, 567, 569, 566; 215/343–344, 215/374, 376; 220/259.3, 789, 801, 319, 220/256.1, 259.1, 657
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A plastic paint container includes a body having an interior and a neck defining an opening to the interior. The neck includes a neck sealing surface. An insert includes an outer wall configured to fit within the opening of the body and defining the periphery of the insert. The outer wall includes an upper edge and a lower edge. A lip extends radially outward from the upper edge to prevent the insert from being pushed to far into or through the neck. The lip is formed from a first material and includes an upper surface and a lower surface. The lip includes a second material formed over the first material. The first material being harder than the second material. A cover is threadably engaged with the neck. The second material contacts the neck sealing surface and a cover sealing surface when the cover is threadably engaged on the neck.

18 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets

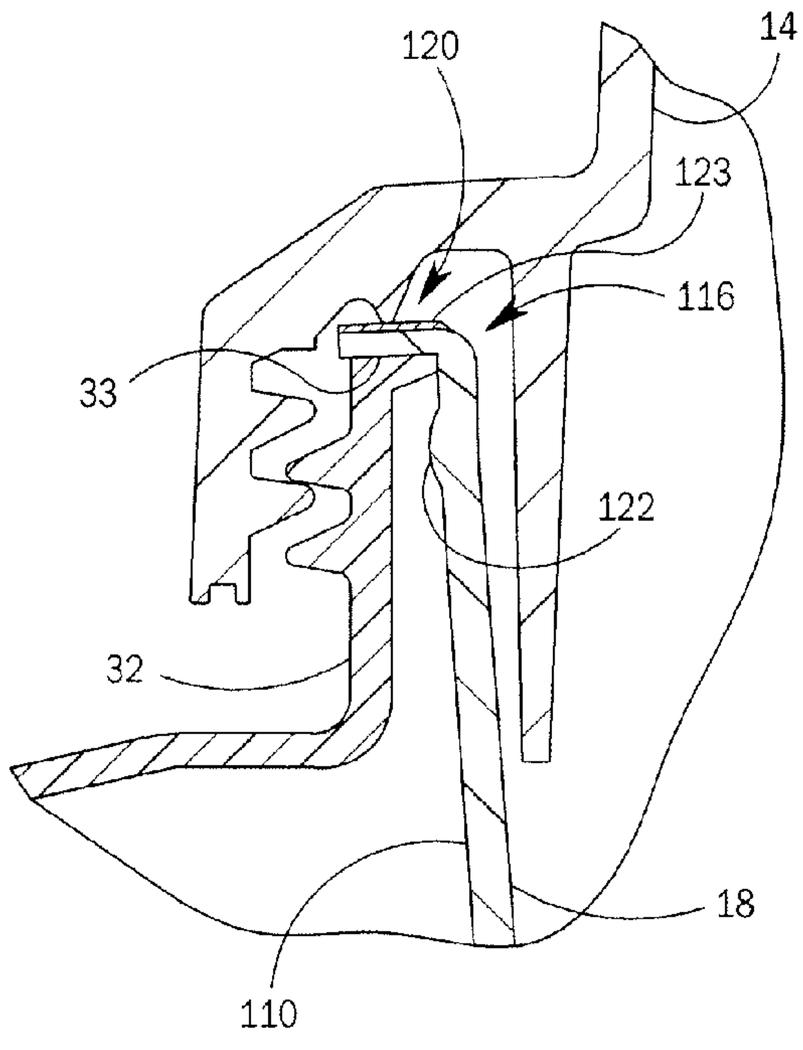

FIG. 1

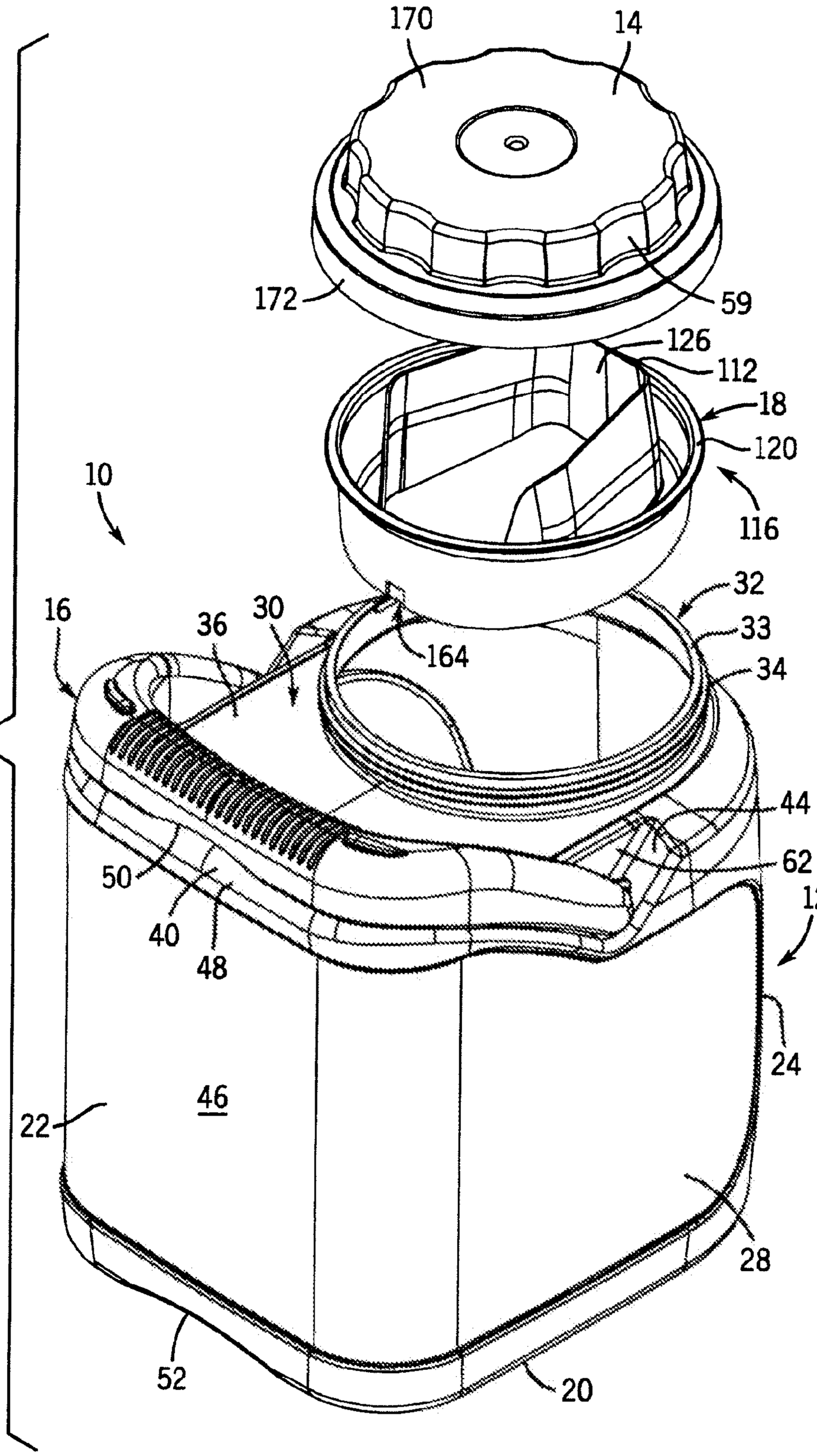
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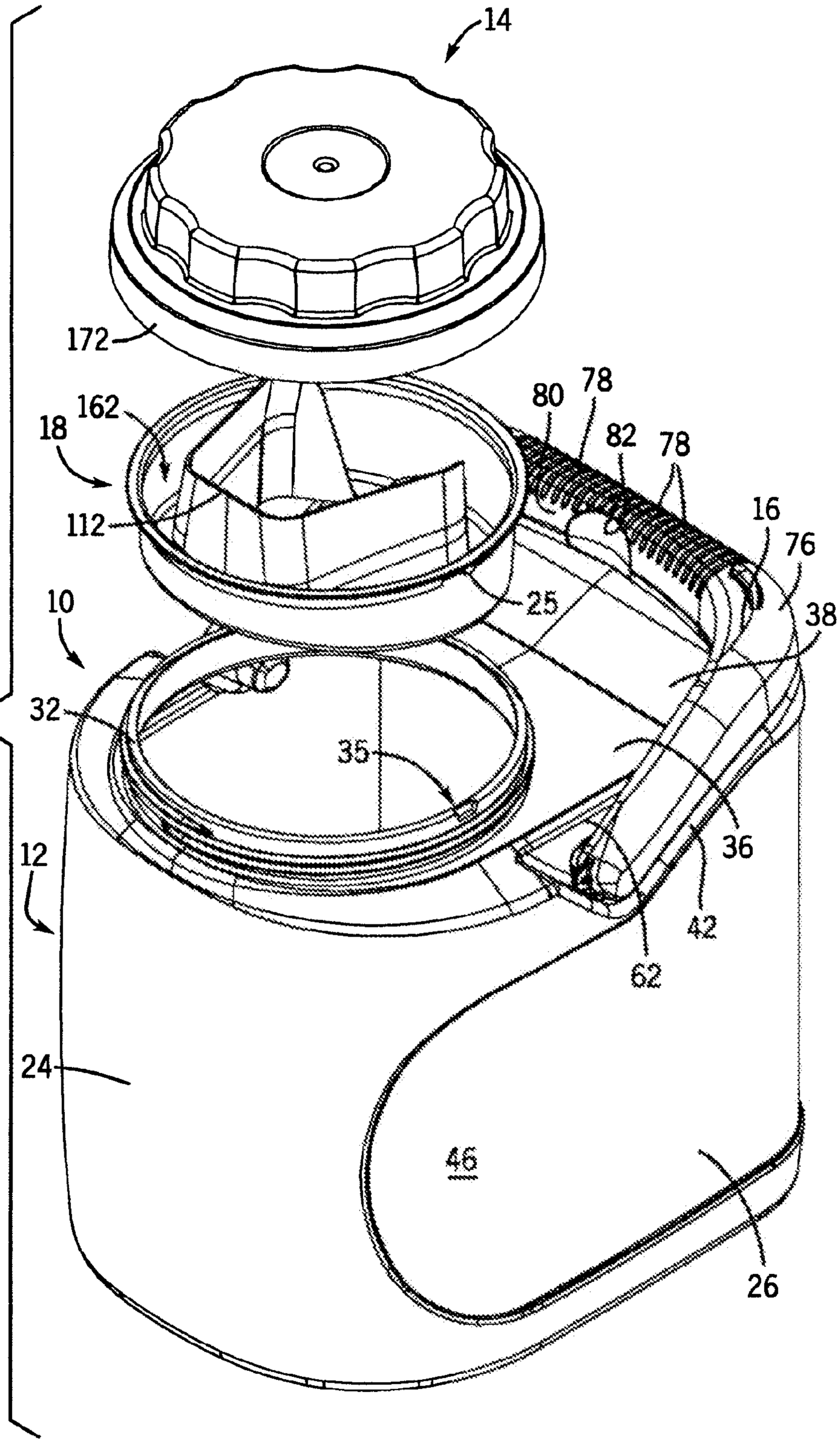
FIG. 2



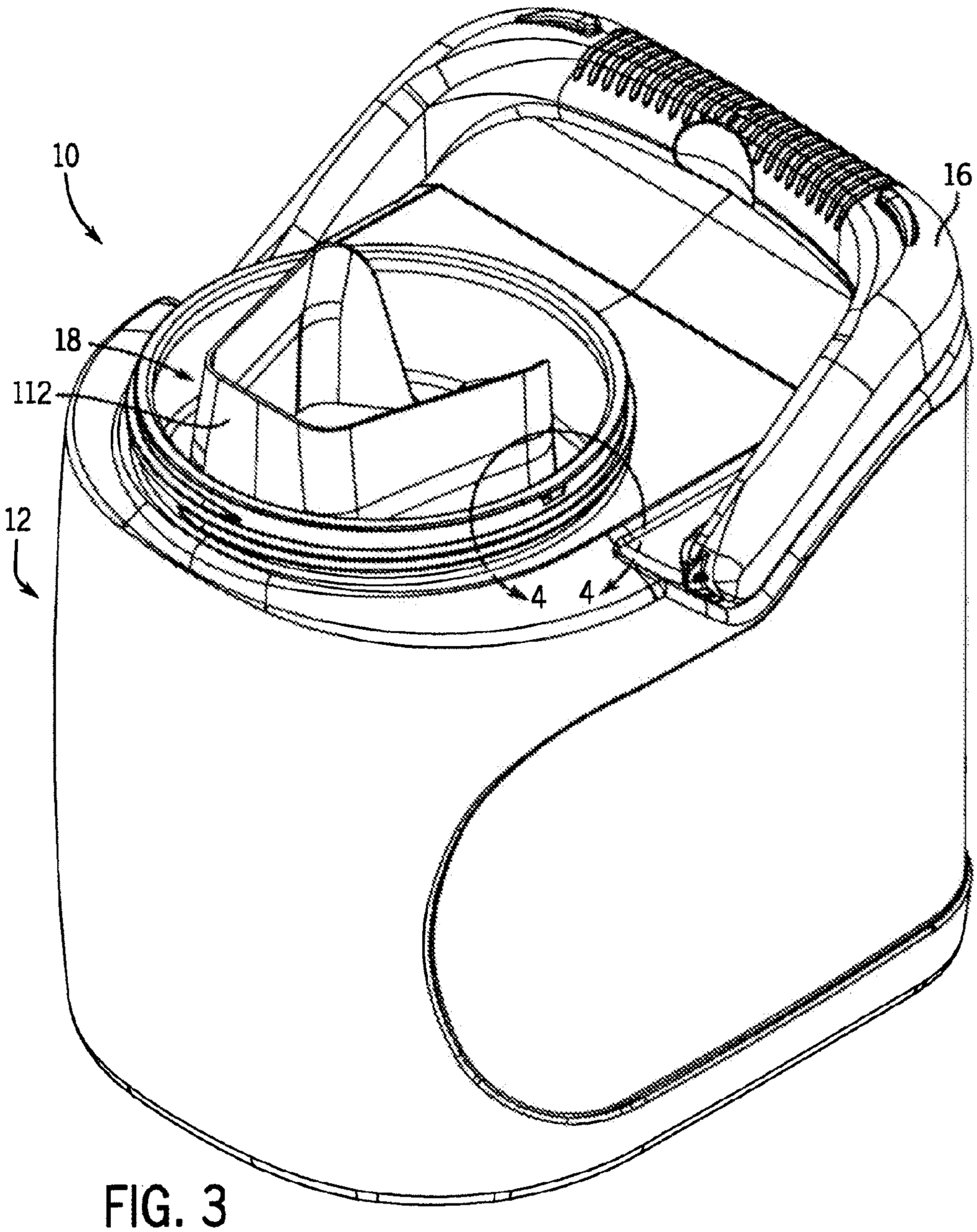


FIG. 3

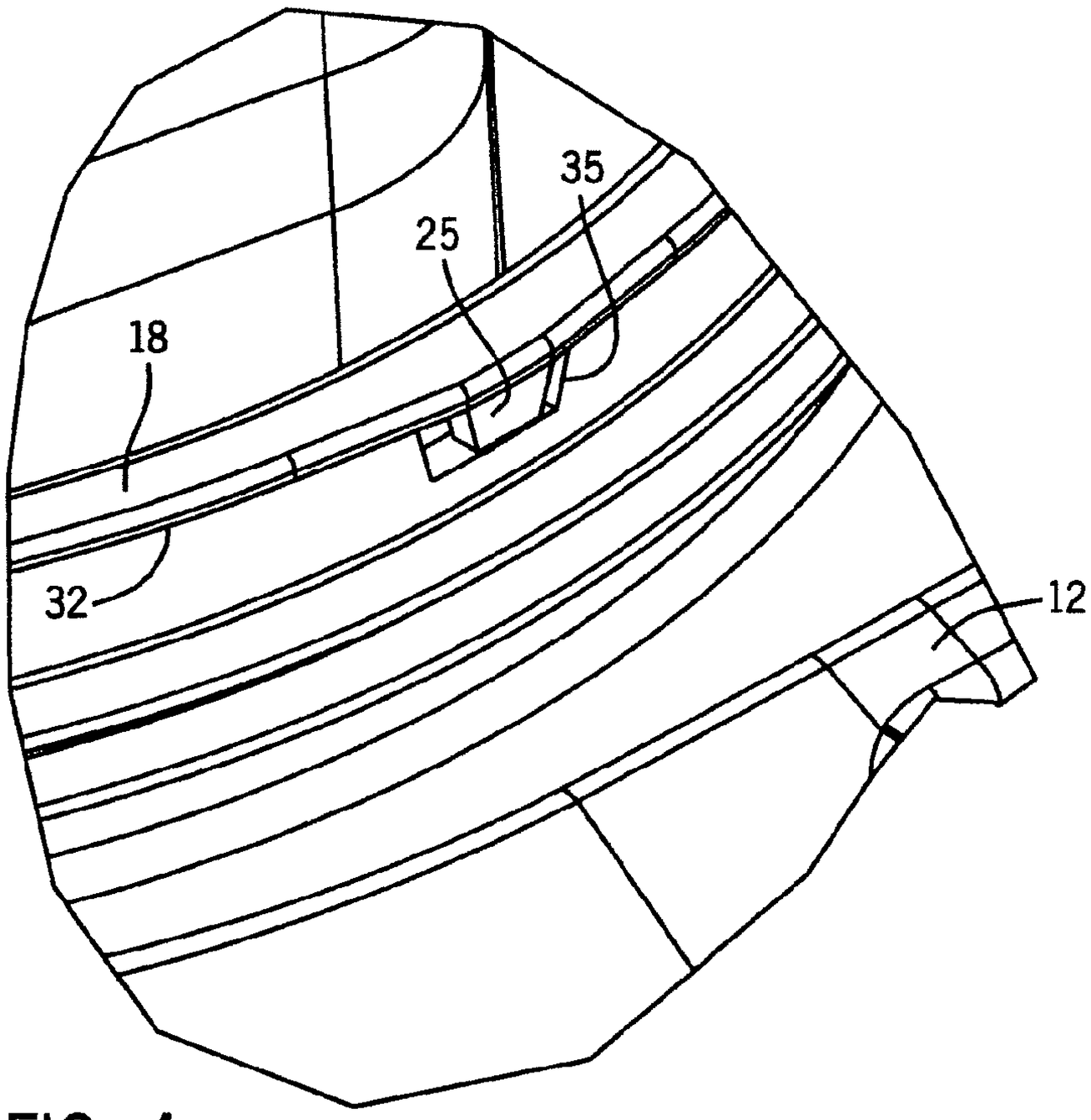


FIG. 4

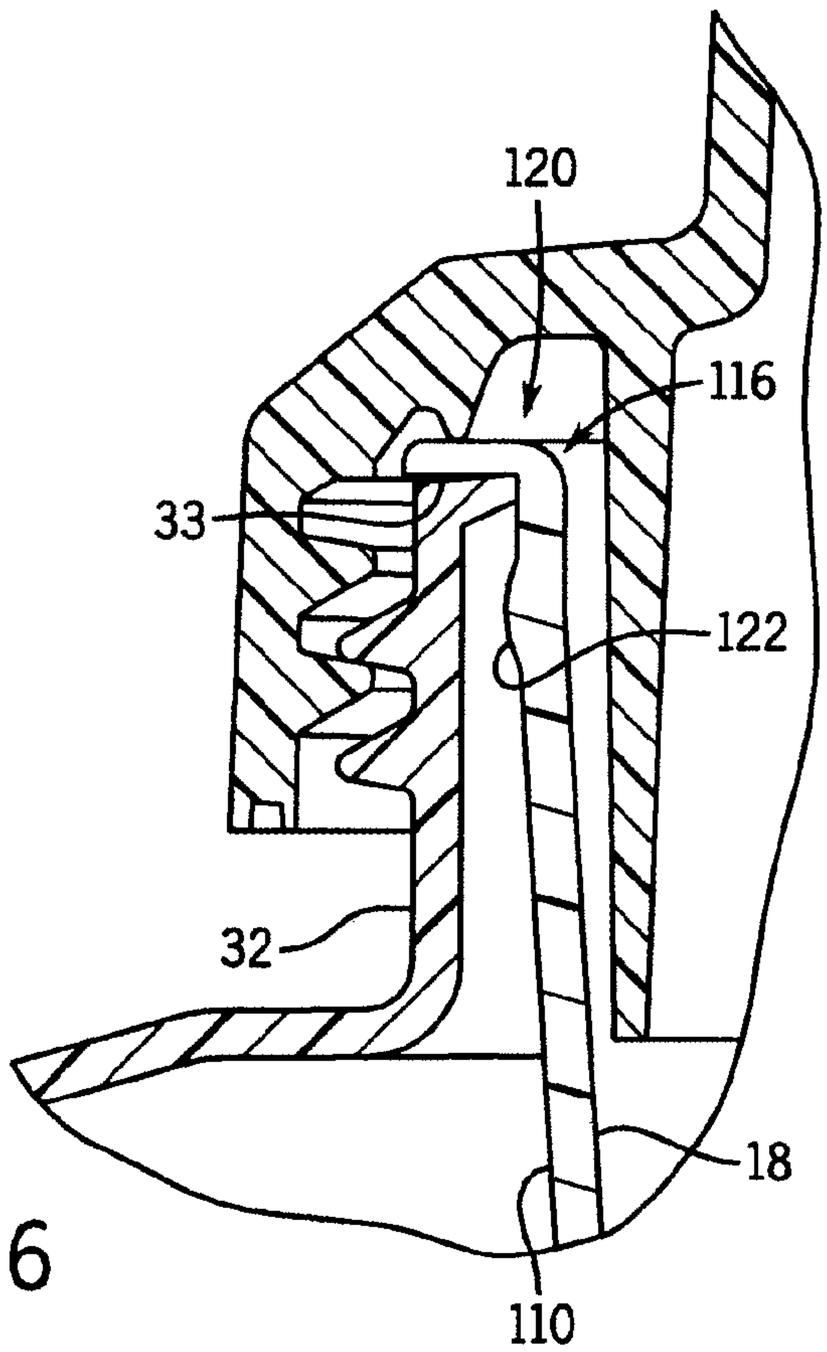


FIG. 6

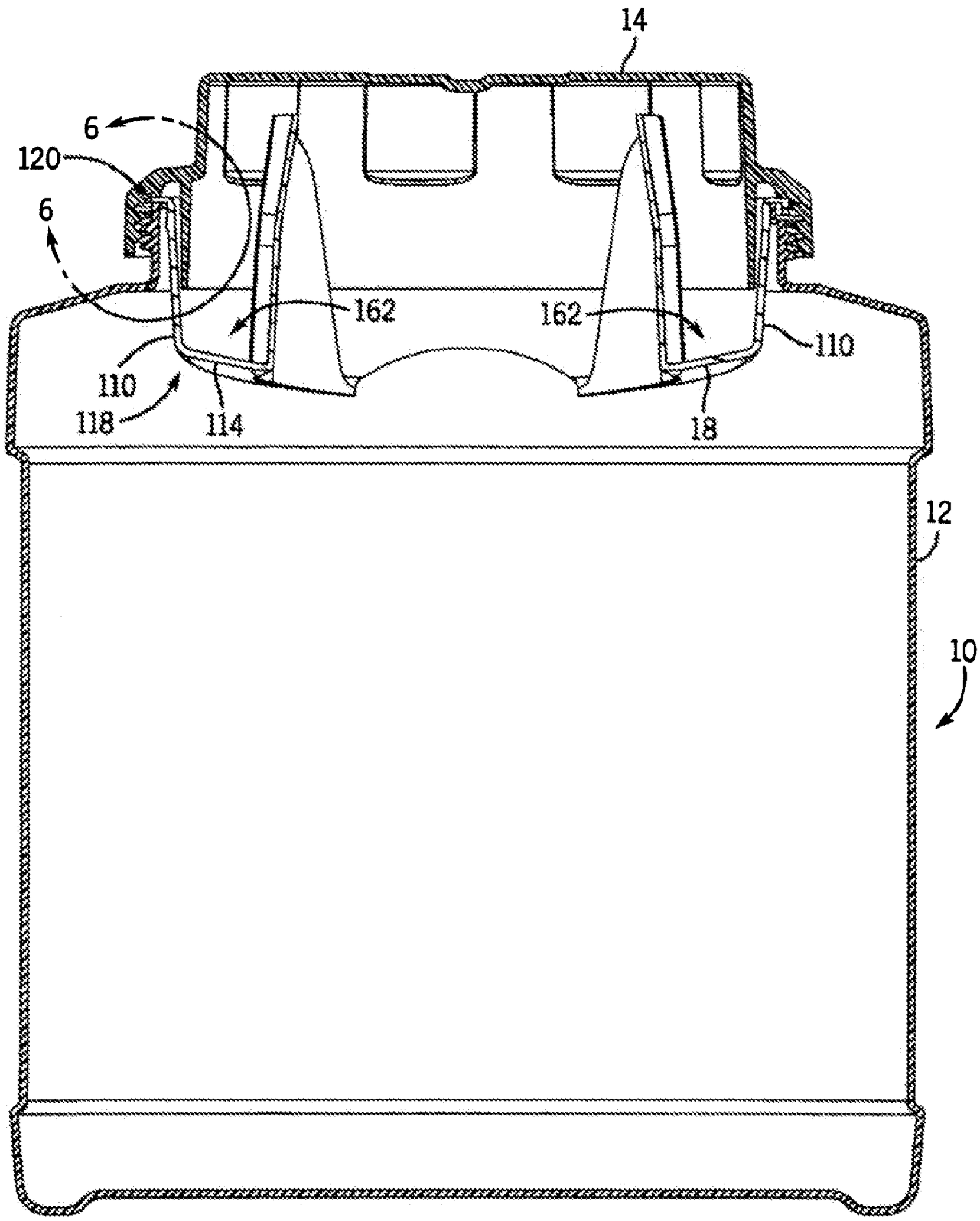
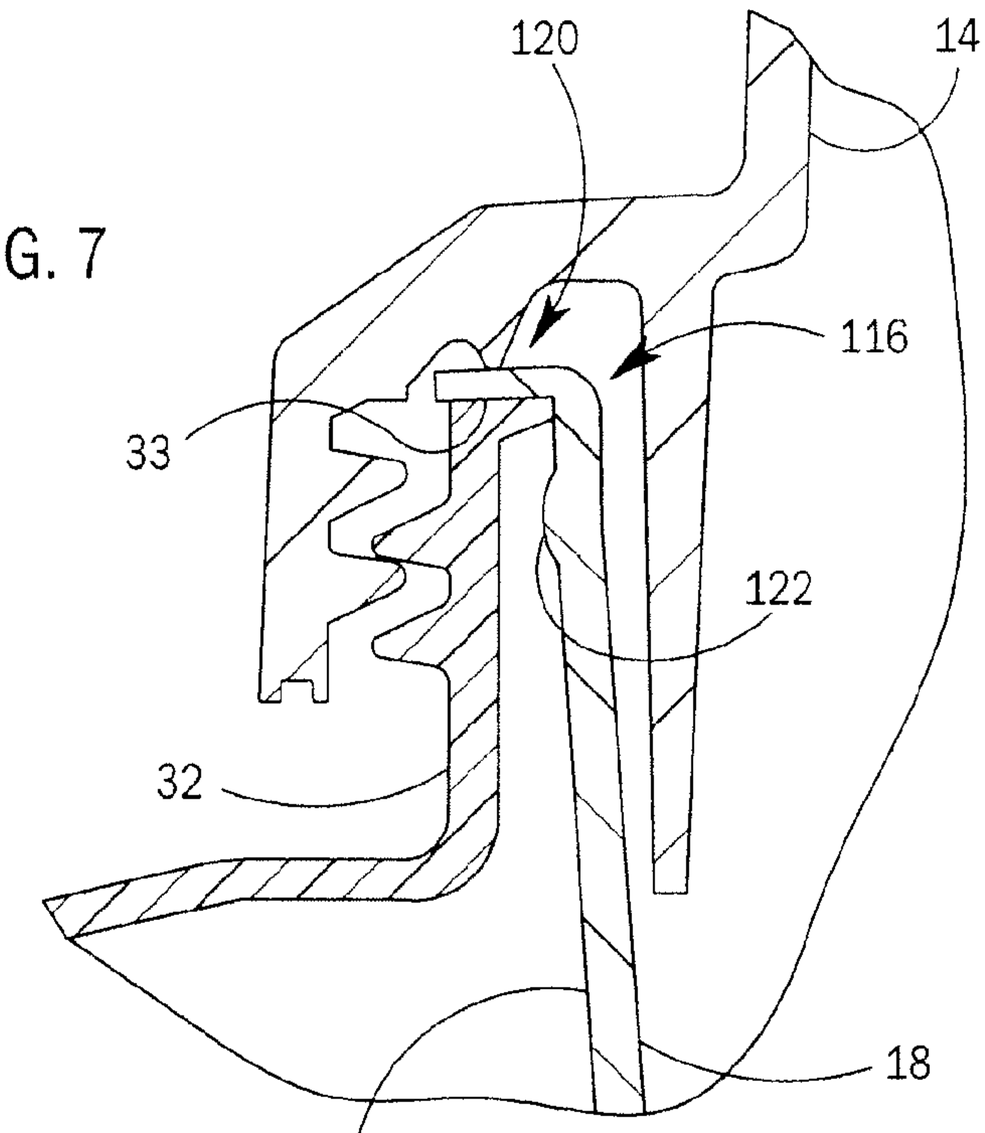


FIG. 5

FIG. 7



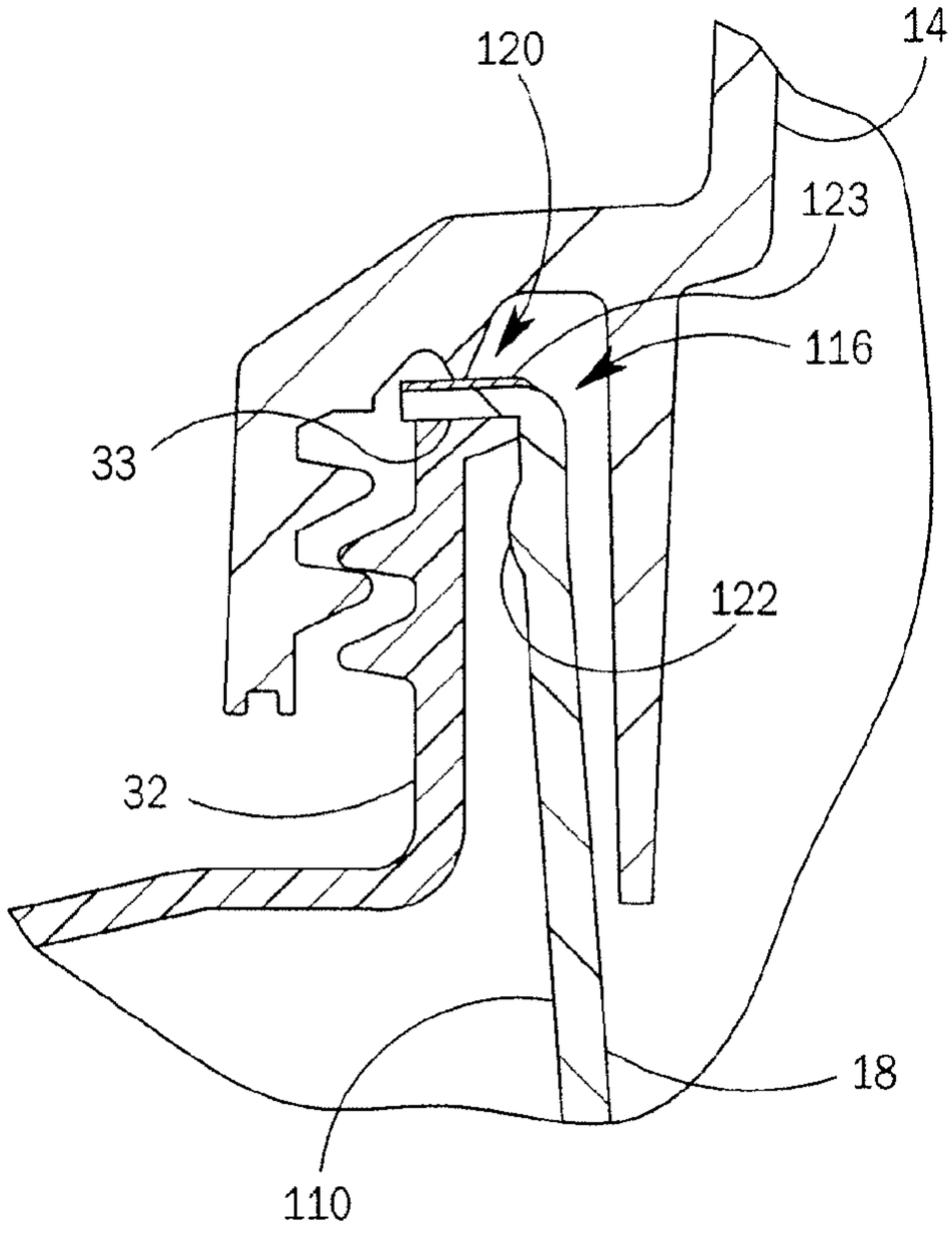


FIG. 8

CONTAINER SEALING SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of and priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/549,078, filed on Mar. 1, 2004, entitled "Container Sealing System," which is incorporated herein by this reference. This application is related to U.S. Provisional Patent Application 60/515,156, filed Oct. 28, 2003, which is incorporated herein by this reference.

BACKGROUND

The present invention relates generally to the field of sealing systems for containers and more specifically to a sealing system for a container having a spout.

Plastic containers for viscous liquids such as laundry detergent and paint have been disclosed, including a reclamation spout that is placed within the opening of the container. In a non-circular container, it is desirable to specifically locate the spout relative to the container such that the pouring edge of the spout is positioned in a desired location. A number of attempts have been made to specifically locate the spout relative to the container.

A spout locator is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,984,714 to Sledge entitled Spouted Bottle. In Sledge, typically the cap creates a seal with the container by at least partially contacting the neck and/or spout.

In U.S. Pat. No. 6,209,762, to Haffner, et al. entitled DISPENSING PACKAGE AND METHOD OF USE, a lug formed on a neck engages a slot formed in the spout to retain the spout within the neck.

It would be desirable to provide a container with a spout and cap that may be positively positioned relative to the container and also provide a seal between the cap and the container and spout to prevent the liquid from leaking.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is an exploded perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a container including a container sealing system.

FIG. **2** is an exploded perspective view of the container illustrated in FIG. **1**.

FIG. **3** is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a container having a notch formed in the neck and configured to receive a tooth formed in the spout insert.

FIG. **4** is a partial detail view of the notch illustrated in FIG. **3** with a tooth formed on the spout insert engaged in the notch.

FIG. **5** is a cross-section of an exemplary embodiment of a container including a spout insert and cover and having a container sealing system.

FIG. **6** is a partial cross-section detail view of the container sealing system illustrated in FIG. **5**.

FIG. **7** is a partial cross-section detail view of a container sealing system including a linear low density polyethylene spout.

FIG. **8** is a partial cross-section detail view of a container sealing system including a spout having an overmold of a thermoplastic elastomer.

SUMMARY

A plastic paint container includes a body having an interior and a neck defining an opening to the interior. The neck includes a neck sealing surface. An insert includes an outer wall configured to fit within the opening of the body and defining the periphery of the insert. The outer wall includes an upper edge and a lower edge. A lip extends radially outward from the upper edge to prevent the insert from being pushed to far into or through the neck. The lip is formed from a first material and includes an upper surface and a lower surface. The lip includes a second material formed over the first material. The first material being harder than the second material. A cover is threadably engaged with the neck. The second material contacts the neck sealing surface and a cover sealing surface when the cover is threadably engaged on the neck.

In another embodiment, a paint container includes a body having an interior and a neck defining an opening to the interior. The neck includes a neck sealing surface and the body is formed from a first plastic material. An insert includes an outer wall configured to fit within the opening of the body and defining the periphery of the insert. The outer wall includes an upper edge and a lower edge. A lip extends radially outward from the upper edge to prevent the insert from being pushed to far into or through the neck. The insert is formed from a linear low density polyethylene. A plastic cover is configured to threadably engage the neck. The insert contacts the neck sealing surface and cover sealing surface when the cover is threadably engaged on the neck. The first plastic material and second plastic material is harder than the linear low density polyethylene, so that the insert deforms to provide a complete seal between the neck surface and the cover sealing surface.

In yet another embodiment, a plastic paint container includes a plastic body having an interior and a neck defining an opening to the interior. An insert includes an outer wall configured to fit within the opening of the body a lip extending radially outward from the upper edge of the outer wall to prevent the insert from being pushed to far into or through the neck. The lip including a second material overmolded thereto. The insert including an upstanding spout located within the outer wall. A bottom wall connects the lower edge of the outer wall and the spout to form a channel between the outerwall and the spout. The second material contacts the neck and cover when the cover is threadably engaged on the neck. The cover and neck having a hardness greater than the second material.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

Referring to FIGS. **1** and **2**, a container **10** includes a body **12**, a cap **14**, a handle **16**, and a spout insert **18**. Body **12** has a general D-shape configuration and includes a bottom **20**, a front wall **22**, an opposing rear wall **24**, and first and second side walls **26**, **28**. Body **12** also includes a top **30** having a neck **32** provided with external threads **34**. The use of the terms "front" and "rear" refer to the position that the container may be placed on a retail shelf. While the container may be placed on the retail shelf in any orientation, front wall **22** provides a planar surface for a display label. While the container is in actual use, the location of spout **18** may be considered the front; however, for purposes of this description, spout **18** is closer to back wall **24**.

Top **30** also includes a first land region **36** proximate neck **32**, a second angled transitional region **38** and an upper region **40** configured to support handle **16**. Land region **36** may be flat or parallel to a horizontal plane as illustrated or may have another profile. Adjacent sides **26**, **28** and top **30** is a pair of handle support regions **42** that begin lower than first land region **36** and angle upward to transition region **38** and upper region **40**. Region **42** as measured from a vertical plane in one

embodiment is preferably about 45 degrees. Additionally, a back handle support region **44** as described below supports handle **16** in a rearward position closer to spout **18**. Back handle support region **44** as measured from a vertical plane is preferably about 60 degrees. The angle of support region **44** in combination with the size of handle **16** prohibits handle **16** from contacting spout **18** or the rear portion of body **12**, and still provides clearance over cap **14** to lift handle **16**. Accordingly, other angles of region **44** may be used.

Body **12** also includes a recessed region **46** that extends across the substantially flat front wall **22** and around at least a portion of the curved back wall **24**. Recessed region **46** may receive a label that could be applied during the forming operation such as in-mold labeling for a plastic formed component. A label may also be applied to the container after the container has been formed.

A front edge **48** of upper support region **40** may be curved or beveled as a transition into front wall **22**. This transition edge **48** provides an easy surface for a user to be able to grasp handle **16**. While the front edge **48** may have a recessed region permitting a user to slide his fingers under the handle, handle **16** may also include a handle recess **50** either in addition to a recess on edge **48** or independent of such a recess. A disruption in the interface between handle **16** and top **30** and front wall **22** allows a user to easily grasp and raise handle **16**.

A bottom recess **52** is located on the bottom edge of container **10** between front wall **22** and bottom **20**. Bottom recess **52** allows a user to reach under the bottom of container **10** while container **10** is resting on a supporting surface or on another container **10**. Bottom recess **52** further facilitates pouring paint from container **10**. Bottom recess **52** is connected to a finger recess or well (not shown) extending inwardly into container **10** from bottom **20**. The finger recess may be located immediately proximate bottom recess **52** or may be connected to bottom recess **52** with a recess channel (not shown). Bottom recess **52**, the recess channel, and the finger recess may be configured to comfortably rest on a user's hand to aid the user in pouring the content from the container. While one hand is holding handle **16**, a second hand may be grasping the bottom by use of the bottom recess **52**, the finger recess, and the recess channel either together or in any combination of these features.

The height of bottom recess **52** as measured from a support surface of the container, or as measured from the lowest support features on bottom **20**, may be sufficient to allow a user to insert his fingers or portion of his finger in the bottom recess, the channel recess, and/or the finger recess. This would allow a user in combination with the handle to easily lift the container from a support surface such as a retail outlet shelf, table or another container.

Bottom **20** may also include a cap recess (not shown) that is configured to receive a portion of cap **14** when like containers **10** are stacked on one another. The cap recess may include a periphery having features that match those of cap **14** such as indentations to match recesses **59** that are provided on cap **14**. Alternatively, the cap recess may have an outer diameter that matches or exceeds the outer diameter of cap **14**. The container **10** can be manufactured by any well known procedure, for example by blow molding from plastic.

Referring to FIGS. **5** & **6**, spout insert **18** includes an outer wall **110**, a spout **112**, and a bottom wall **114**. Outer wall **110** is configured to slide into neck **32** and includes features (described below) to hold insert **18** within neck **32**. According to one embodiment, outer wall **110** is a substantially cylindrical wall that defines the periphery of spout insert **18** and that includes an upper edge **116** and a lower edge **118**. A small lip **120** extends radially outwardly from upper edge **116**, and serves as a stop to prevent insert **18** from being pushed too far into, or through, neck **32**. The lip **120** extends up to but does not extend past or over the upper edge **33** of the neck **32**. The interface between the upper edge **33** of the neck **32** and the lip **120** of the spout insert **18** forms a seal as the cover **14** is threaded onto the neck **32** of the container **10**. A radially outwardly extending protrusion **122** extends around the periphery of outer wall **110**, and is configured to engage a corresponding groove (not shown) provided on the inside of neck **32**. The engagement of protrusion **122** and the corresponding groove serves to hold spout **18** into the proper vertical position with respect to container **10**.

The spout insert **18** also includes a protrusion or tooth **25** configured to engage a corresponding pocket or notch **35** formed in the neck **32** (See FIGS. **3** & **4**.). The tooth **25**/notch **35** configuration prevents rotation of the spout insert **18** and also functions as an index to align the spout insert **18** with the container **10** for decanting the contents of the container **10**. A typical alignment is for the spout **112** of the spout insert **18** to be aligned with the center line of the container **10** rear wall **24** as best seen in FIG. **2**. It should be understood that the tooth **25** may be formed on the neck **32** and the notch **35** formed in the spout **18**. It should also be understood that the tooth **25**/notch **35** configuration may be located at any convenient location along the periphery of the neck **32**.

According to alternative embodiments, the outer wall may include other features to prevent the insert from being pushed too far into the neck of the container and/or to hold the insert in the neck. For example, the insert may include threads on the outer wall that engage threads provided on the inside of the neck when the insert is screwed into the neck. The insert may also be coupled to the neck using a frictional-type fit, spin-welding, adhesives, or any of a wide variety of other techniques and methods known in the art.

Spout **112** is provided within the periphery of insert **18** (e.g., spout **112** is inside of, and spaced apart from, outer wall **110**) and is generally configured to facilitate the pouring of the contents (e.g., paint or other fluids) from container **10**. The walls of the spout **112** each may have straight upper edges, over which the contents of container **10** (e.g., liquid coating materials such as paint, varnish, etc.; water; liquids; or other substances) are poured when the contents of container **10** are removed using spout **112**. The straight upper edges may also be used as brush wipes to wipe excessive paint off of a brush.

Bottom wall **114** extends between outer wall **110** and spout **112** and serves to couple lower edge **118** of outer wall **110**. A channel **162** is thereby formed by outer wall **110**, bottom wall **114**, and spout **112** that extends around insert **18** between outer wall **110** and spout **112**. An aperture **164** is provided in channel **162** (partially in bottom wall **114** and partially in the lower portion of outer wall **110**) at a location opposite wall **126**. Aperture **164** is configured such that substances (such as paint, for example) that enter channel **162** can pass through aperture **164** and drain back into body **12** of container **10**. In order to direct any substances that may enter channel **162** toward aperture **164**, channel **162** slopes toward aperture **164**. To enable channel **162** to slope toward aperture **164**, lower edge **118** of outer wall **110**; lower edges of walls of the spout **112**, and bottom wall **114** are also sloped as needed to allow channel **162** to slope toward aperture **164**.

As shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, spout insert **18** is preferably coupled to container **10** in such a way that wall **126** is proximate back wall **24** of body **12** (e.g., such that wall **126** is the back most portion of spout **112**). In such a configuration, a user of container **10** may grasp handle **16** with one hand and the bottom of container **10** (more particularly, bottom recess **52**, the finger recess, and/or the recess channel) with the other

hand and pour paint (or other material contained within body **12**) from spout **112** over straight upper edge and over back wall **24** of container **10**. Once container **10** is returned to an upright position, any paint that may have entered channel **162** (such as during pouring or while wiping a paint brush against one of the straight edges of spout **112**) will flow toward aperture **164** and pass back into body **12** of container **10**. Channel **162** thereby reduces the likelihood that excess paint will drip down the side of container **10**, which may hamper the ability to read any label that may be provided on container **10** and which may allow paint to get on surfaces for which the paint was not intended. A gap provided in spout **112** may also serve to allow paint that enters channel **162** to pass back into body **12**. If one desires to use the paint directly from container **10**, the user may simply apply paint to his or her paint brush by inserting the paint brush into body **12** between walls of spout **112**. Straight upper edges of the spout can then be used to wipe any excess paint from the brush. When finished using the paint, the user simply replaces cap **14**. The walls of the spout **112** may be higher than the upper edge **116** of the neck **32** or the walls may be below or at the same elevation as the upper edge **116** of the neck **132**.

Referring to FIGS. **7** & **8** (which has the same aspect as FIG. **6**), spout insert **18** includes an outer wall **110**, a spout **112**, and a bottom wall **114**. Outer wall **110** is configured to slide into neck **32** and includes features (described below) to hold insert **18** within neck **32**. According to one embodiment, outer wall **110** is a substantially cylindrical wall that defines the periphery of spout insert **18** and that includes an upper edge **116** and a lower edge **118**. A small lip **120** extends radially outwardly from upper edge **116**, and serves as a stop to prevent insert **18** from being pushed too far into, or through, neck **32**. The lip **120** extends up to but does not extend past or over the upper edge **33** of the neck **32**.

In one embodiment, the spout **18** is composed of linear low density polyethylene (LLDPE), which will deform as the cap **14** is threadingly attached to the container **10** to form a seal. (See FIG. **7**.) LLDPE is a narrow molecular weight distribution copolymer that tends to resist stress cracks and is flexible. An example of a linear low density polyethylene is Dowlex® 2517. In another embodiment, the lip **120** includes an overmold **123** of material composed of thermoplastic elastomer, which will deform as the cap **14** is threadingly attached to the container **10** to form a seal. (See FIG. **8**). The cap **14** and the container **10** material composition is typically harder than the material composition of the spout **18**. In both such embodiments, the material compression on the container upper edge **33** seals the container and accommodates irregularities in the container **10** and cap **14**.

The interface between the upper edge **33** of the neck **32** and the lip **120** of the spout insert **18** forms a seal as the cover **14** is threaded onto the neck **32** of the container **10**. A radially outwardly extending protrusion **122** extends around the periphery of outer wall **110**, and is configured to engage a corresponding groove (not shown) provided on the inside of neck **32**. The engagement of protrusion **122** and the corresponding groove serves to hold spout **18** into the proper vertical position with respect to container **10**.

According to various alternative embodiments, the spout insert may take any one of a plurality of different configurations. For example, any one or more of the walls of the spout may extend vertically upward or may be angled either toward or away from the center of the spout as they extend upwardly. Furthermore, the upper edges of the walls may have the same elevations, or they may different elevations. Moreover, the elevation of the upper edge of any one or more of the walls of the spout may vary along the length of the wall, or it may be constant. For example, the upper edge of one or more of the spout walls may be level or it may have an increasing or decreasing elevation. The walls may also be configured such that the upper edge of the spout, as a whole, is level or such that it increases and/or decreases in elevation. Additionally, the elevation of the walls of the spout may vary with respect to the height of the outer wall or with respect to the height of various parts of the container. Thus, the upper edge of one or more of the spout walls may extend above, below, or be even with the upper edge of the outer wall, the upper edge of the neck of the container, and/or the edge of some other feature of the container. According to still other alternative embodiments, the lower edge of any one or more of the spout walls may be straight, curved, arced, or may have some other shape. Moreover, the length of any one or more of the spout walls may vary. The overall size and shape of the spout may also vary. For example, the spout may be configured to allow a variety of different sized paint brushes to pass through the spout and into the body of the container. According to another alternative embodiment, any one or more of the upper edges of the walls of the spout may have a comb-like configuration intended to comb excess paint from paint brushes. According to another alternative embodiment, the spout insert may be integrally-formed with the container. According to yet another alternative embodiment, the spout insert may not include an outer wall or a channel, but rather, may be comprised of one or more walls coupled together to form a spout. According to still other alternative embodiments, the spout insert may include only one of the aperture provided in the channel and the gap provided in the spout. According to other alternative embodiments, the transition between one or more of the walls of the spout may be a sharp, distinct corner; it may have a radius; it may be tapered or beveled; or it may have some other gradual or abrupt transition. According to other alternative embodiments, the container may include an opening on a side other than its top side and may include a spout insert within such opening. It should be noted that references to "upper," "lower," "top," "bottom," "height," and/or "elevation" refer to certain portions, positions and/or dimensions of the spout (and other parts of the container) as they would appear when the container is placed as intended on a retail shelf. However, it should be understood that these references apply equally to spout inserts (and other parts of the container) that are oriented differently. Thus, the "elevation" of the upper edge of a spout that extends horizontally out of the side of a container would be the same as the "elevation" of an identical spout extending vertically from the top of a container.

The cap **14** serves both as a cover and a dish for material held in the container, for example, paint. The cap **14** includes a downwardly extending wall that extends from the top of the cap between the spout insert **18** and the neck **32** of the container **10**. The cap **14** may include internal threads that threadably engage threads **34** formed on the neck **32**. The cap **14** can be configured to receive a molded logo, a clear window to see the interior of the container **10**, or other indicia to identify the contents in the container. The cap **14** may be formed by two or more materials, for example a rubber based, thermoplastic elastomer, polypropylene, or other type of plastic or elastomer using a two-shot or bi-injection molding process. The cap **14** can be configured to provide a portion of a second material to extend into recesses **59** formed on the outer periphery of the cap **14**, which may assist the user in gripping and manipulating the cap **14** on and off the container **10**. Various textures may be molded into the second material and different colors of the material may be employed during the molding process.

Further modifications may be made in the design, arrangement and combination of the elements without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, a top member including one or more of the features discussed above such as the spout, reclamation structure or channel, and others may be integrally formed with the body member or may be fastened to the container as a separate component. Additionally, the container may include transparent areas to allow the user to see the contents of the container. Further, the cap attachment may include a transparent area to indicate whether the cap is securely attached to the container to prevent paint from accidentally being spilled. Although the container has been referred to as a paint container, other liquids may be stored and poured as well. While some of the features have a unique application to the storage and application of paint, other features may be used for other liquids as well. Additionally, the label that is applied to the container may include a blank white portion to permit the user or manufacturer to dab or paint a sample of the paint in the container to clearly show what color is contained within the container and how it will appear when painted on a white background. It is also noted that the features described in the specification and shown in the Figures either alone or in combination may also be combined with individual or multiple features disclosed herein or in the priority applications noted above. These and other modifications may be made in the design, arrangement and combination of the elements without departing from the scope of the invention as expressed in the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A paint container comprising:

a body having an interior and a neck defining an opening to the interior, the neck having a neck sealing surface;

an insert including an outer wall configured to fit within the opening of the body and defining the periphery of the insert, the outer wall having an upper edge and a lower edge, a lip extending radially outward from the upper edge to prevent the insert from being pushed to far into or through the neck, the lip being formed of a first material, and including an upper surface and a lower surface, the lip including a second material formed over the first material, the first material being harder than the second material, the insert including an upstanding spout located within the outer wall and a bottom wall connecting the lower edge of the outer wall and the spout to form a channel between the outerwall and the spout;

a cover configured to threadably engage the neck, the cover having a cover sealing surface;

wherein the second material contacts the neck sealing surface and cover sealing surface when the cover is threadably engaged on the neck.

2. The paint container of claim **1**, wherein the second material is a thermoplastic elastomer that is overmolded to the lip.

3. The paint container of claim **2**, wherein the lip includes a discontinuity to allow the second material to securely engage the lip.

4. The paint container of claim **3**, wherein the lip includes a terminal end and the discontinuity is located a predetermined distance inward from the terminal end.

5. The paint container of claim **4**, wherein the discontinuity is a raised ridge.

6. The paint container of claim **4**, wherein the discontinuity is a recessed groove.

7. The paint container of claim **4**, wherein the discontinuity is located adjacent the terminal end of the lip and extending from the upper and lower surfaces of the lip.

8. The paint container of claim **4**, wherein the discontinuity extends from both the upper and lower surface of the lip.

9. The paint container of claim **8**, wherein the discontinuity has a bulbous shape.

10. The paint container of claim **9**, wherein the insert is formed from a linear low density polyethylene.

11. A paint container comprising:

a body having an interior and a neck defining an opening to the interior, the neck having a neck sealing surface, the body being formed of a first plastic material;

an insert including an outer wall configured to fit within the opening of the body and defining a periphery of the insert, the outer wall having an upper edge and a lower edge, a lip extending radially outward from the upper edge to prevent the insert from being pushed to far into or through the neck, the insert being formed from a linear low density polyethylene; and

a plastic cover configured to threadably engage the neck, the cover having a cover sealing surface, the cover being formed of a second material;

wherein a third material is formed over the lip, the first and second materials of the body and cover respectively being harder than the third material.

12. The paint container of claim **11**, wherein the third material is a thermoplastic elastomer that is overmolded to the lip.

13. The paint container of claim **11**, wherein the lip includes a discontinuity to allow the third material to securely engage the lip.

14. A plastic paint container comprising:

a plastic body having an interior and a neck defining an opening to the interior, the neck having a neck sealing surface;

an insert including an outer wall configured to fit within the opening of the body and defining the periphery of the insert, the outer wall having an upper edge and a lower edge, a lip extending radially outward from the upper edge to prevent the insert from being pushed to far into or through the neck, the lip being formed of a first material, and including an upper surface and a lower surface, the lip including a second material overmolded to the first material, the insert including an upstanding spout located within the outer wall and a bottom wall connecting the lower edge of the outer wall and the spout to form a channel between the outerwall and the spout; and

a cover configured to threadably engage the neck, the cover having a cover sealing surface;

wherein the second material contacts the neck sealing surface and cover sealing surface when the cover is threadably engaged on the neck, the materials of the cover and neck having a hardness greater than the second material.

15. The paint container of claim **14** wherein the second material is a thermoplastic elastomer.

16. The paint container of claim **15**, wherein the lip includes a discontinuity to allow the second material to securely engage the lip.

17. The paint container of claim **16**, wherein the lip includes a terminal end and the discontinuity is located a predetermined distance inward from the terminal end.

18. The paint container of claim **17**, wherein the insert is formed from a linear low density polyethylene.

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